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ABSTRACT

Values education is concerned with helping people determine worth in making practical, esthetic, and moral judgments. The purposes of this paper are: (1) to argue that the teaching of values in school is unavoidable, (2) to suggest that current efforts in values education are insufficient, and (3) to offer suggestions for a more comprehensive approach. Values education must concern itself with intellectual development and emotional growth. Because schools currently are not clear on what "values education" means, they are not clear on an approach. A comprehensive program would be centered around value dilemmas. This student-centered approach would allow students to debate and offer alternatives to these dilemmas. Cognitive and affective skills and motivational objectives for values education are outlined. (KC)

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VALUES EDUCATION: TOWARD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

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VALUES EDUCATION: TOWARD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

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The purposes of this paper are threefold: (1) to argue that the teaching of values in schools is, though rarely explicit, unavoidable; (2) to suggest that our current efforts to educate students in values are not sufficient; and (3) to offer some suggestions as to what a more comprehensive approach might include.

What are values?

The term "value" has been defined in many ways, but for the purposes of this paper I shall define it as follows: value means worth. Values are not things, but rather ideas about what things (ideas, procedures, policies, ways of thinking, behaving, etc.) are worth, that is, whether they are worth doing, worth having, or worth trying to attain. In short, they are constructs. They do not exist in experience, but are shaped by human beings out of experience.

The values of people are reflected in what they say and what they do. Needless to say perhaps, one can never be sure that a particular statement or action (or even a set of statements or actions) reflects a particular value. We can only infer the presence of a value based on the frequency of and consistency between statements and actions which we observe over time.

The Teaching of Values

There is an increasing realization by people that the public schools are implicitly involved in values education. Every day, in countless ways, the schools teach values. Both the visible and the

hidden curriculum of the school testify to this fact. Values are reflected in the kinds of sports which are favored; in the code of sportsmanship which is emphasized; in the sorts of behaviors that are frowned upon; in the ways that students are taught to respond to those of different ethnic, religious, sexual, or socio-economic backgrounds; in the methods they are taught to use to get at "truth;" in the books that are read, the films that are seen, the songs that are sung; in the holidays that are celebrated; in the manner in which certain issues and topics are discussed (or in the fact that some topics are not discussed at all); in the way the school is organized and governed; and in the ways students are treated by teachers and teachers in turn are treated by administrators. The implicit teaching of values in school is a fact.

The explicit teaching of values, however, is another matter. The word "explicit" means "to be clearly stated or distinctly expressed." An explicit program of values education would be one whose goals and methods are so clearly stated or distinctly set forth, and so carefully planned and consistently carried out, that there is no doubt about what the program intends and involves. I doubt if there is a single school in the United States today that can support the claim that it has such a program.

Nor do most teachers as individuals deal explicitly with values as a part of their daily instruction. The reasons for their not doing so are many and varied. A fear of indoctrinating students perhaps, a belief that such discussions more properly belong or may be more effectively accomplished elsewhere, a reluctance to intrude on what they feel are private matters of personal taste and/or conscience, cost factors, lack of materials, a fear of controversy, admin-

istrative resistance, peer opposition, lack of skill -- all have been offered at one time or another to explain why so few teachers deal explicitly with values in their classrooms. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that most teachers do not deal with values or values issues in any sort of conscious, definite, clearly stated way as a part of their instructional efforts.

As a result, whatever values education there is in most schools occurs more as a result of accident than anything else. Particular values are reflected in surroundings, materials, assignments, directives, or policies, rather than being discussed and assessed on any sort of systematic basis as a regular part of the school curriculum.

The fact that values education occurs implicitly rather than explicitly in most schools has some serious effects. First, teachers may unconsciously endorse values they do not want to endorse, thereby promoting an uncritical acceptance of particular ways of thinking and behaving. Second, they may (also unconsciously) negate certain values that they <u>do</u> want to teach. A teacher who values critical thinking, for example, may implicitly suggest to students that she does not if she uses departmental texts which ask only for the recall or recognition of factual information. Third, students may acquire a number of <u>conflicting</u> values. It is not uncommon, for example, to find schools which expect students to be, among other things, honest, polite, neat, prompt, obedient, loyal, courteour, and critical. Yet students oftentimes find themselves in situations where these values conflict (e.g., where obedience to a school rule would require tattling on a friend; or where being courteous would require refusing to be critical). The mere acquisition of values implicitly endorsed

by the school does not help students decide which of several values to practice if they find themselves in a situation where values conflict.

To prevent ourselves from working at cross-purposes, therefore, and quite possibly producing effects exactly the opposite of what we intend, it behooves us (anyone interested in values education) to ask ourselves whether we want to let values develop accidentally and incidentally without any conscious and active effort on our part (as seems to be the case at present), or whether we want to have some say in the matter. The put up or shut up question is simply this: "Do we or do we not intend, deliberately and explicitly, to try and influence the development of student values in ways we considerable desirable?"

This is not to say, of course, that ways to deal explicitly with values have not been designed nor tried out. Several approaches exist. But they vary considerably in emphasis, methods, and ease of applicability in elementary and secondary school classrooms. More significantly, they differ in their view of what values education involves. One strives to help students clarify their personal committments, another to develop students moral reasoning abilities, a third to improve their ability to assess alternatives in terms of perceived consequences. As a result, one finds a considerable amount of discussion and disagreement about the merits and demerits of each approach. Each has its advocates extolling (often emotionally) the virtues of the approach and its critics identifying (often just as emotionally) its weaknesses.

Furthermore, the comparative efficacy of these approaches is pretty much of an open question. Whether an emphasis on values clarification or the discussion of ethical dilemmas or analyzing alternatives in terms of their consequences produces any significant long - or even

short-range intellectual and/or emotional development in young people remains to be seen. One hears testimony to this effect from time to time, but hard data (based on experimental studies using large, representative samples in a wide variety of settings) which supports or refutes such testimony is very difficult to come by. And the evidence that does exist conflicts.* No studies comparing the effectiveness of current approaches in terms of promoting intellectual and emotional development, to my knowledge, have even been done.

How then is a teacher interested in working with values explicitly to choose from among these approaches? The answer is as simple as it is difficult. "It depends on what that teacher considers values education to be." But herein lies the rub. For most teachers are not at all clear in this regard. Nor are most values educators. And no wonder. The question of what education (especially values education) should be is rarely discussed among school faculties. Courses in educational philosophy are seldom required as a part of a teacher's professional training. Conferences, workshops, and in-service training sessions concentrate more on "how-to-do-it" presentations of specific techniques or demonstrations of particular strategies than on trying to come to grips with what it means to be "educated in values." Only a few writers have addressed themselves to this question.**

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* Many of the studies that have been reported show no difference between experimental and control groups. Of those studies which have reported that the exposure to or participation in the approach has had some positive effect, most have been criticized because of possible experimenter bias, lack of controls, invalidity of measuring instruments, lack of representativesness or smallness of samples, or unwarranted statistical manipulations or interpretations. See Alan Lockwood, "The Effects of Values Clarification and Moral Development Curricula on School-Age Subjects: A Critical Review of Recent Research," (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1977).

** See Rodney Allen, "But the Earth Abideth Forever: Values in

Unless we become clear about what being "educated in values" involves, however (what counts in this regard), the appropriateness of a particular approach (or combination of approaches) is almost impossible to determine. It is rather difficult (to say the least) to choose, on any sort of intelligent basis, which road to take if we are not clear about where we want to go.

On the other hand, if we could become clearer about what we're after when it comes to values education, then figuring out how to get there would become a pretty straightforward sort of question. Which approach (or combination thereof) helps to get us what we want? This is a question of fact, the answer(s) to which can be determined by some carefully controlled, experimental studies of a comparative nature. Now it may be that we won't be able to reach such agreement. If so, we might have to just go on pretty much as we are at present for a while, with particular advocates pushing their own approach, and attempts to discuss where we want to go pretty much ignored. But we certainly have not arrived at this point yet. Most values education workshops and conferences still resolve around elaborations of previously developed approaches like values clarification or moral reasoning, or focus on debates over alleged weaknesses in these (or other) approaches, rather than discussing where we want to go, and to what extent existing approaches will get us there. It is still a rarity at professional meetings even to hear suggestions that values education should be more comprehensive. It is even more unusual to hear specific proposals as to what else (besides perhaps a combination of already existing approaches) a more com-

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Environmental Education Etc." in John R. Meyer, et. al., (eds.), Values Education. Theory/Practice/Problems/Prospects. (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1975), pp. 1-24; John Wilson, Moral Education and the Curriculum, (London: Pergammon Press, 1969); Peter McPhail, et. al., Moral Education in the Secondary School (London: Longman, 1972).

prehensive approach might entail. In the remainder of this paper, therefore, I would like to make some suggestions in this regard.

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When we speak of values education, I assume, following the definition given earlier, that we are talking about helping people determine what is "worth doing, worth having, or worth trying to attain." In short, we are talking about helping students decide if certain things (policies, procedures, objects, ways of thinking, etc.) are better than other things, and the reasons for their being better. The essence of values education to me, therefore, lies in a comparative study and assessment of various recommendations (as reflected in the statements that people make and the actions that they take), and the reasons behind these recommendations. This further requires that students be presented with a number of value dilemmas -- that is, situations or problems in which differing recommendations have been made in the past, or must be made today, and then helped to assess these recommendations.

There are basically three kinds of value dilemmas or disputes which students will experience in life, and which they need to learn how to assess. These are esthetic, practical, and moral disputes. Esthetic value disputes involve disagreements over matters of beauty (e.g., art, music, films, clothing, etc.). Such disputes are not ultimately resolvable by reason, since they almost always involve questions of taste. On occasion, however, a particular esthetic dispute may be resolvable, e.g., when the criteria for a "good" plot in a novel have been mutually agreed on beforehand by the disputants, and the dispute can be reduced to showing that the plot of a particular novel is or is not consistent with these criteria.

Practical value disputes usually involve arguments over the comparative merits of something (an automobile, a washing machine, a knife, a refrigerator, etc.). Most of these kinds of disputes are rationally resolvable, since the disputants usually do agree on the criteria for merit (e.g., they agree on what makes a refrigerator or a knife "good" to begin with). Resolving the dispute involves finding out if the knife or watch in question meets the criteria. Moral value disputes are taken here to mean disputes about the best course of action from a particular standpoint, namely the standpoint from which the good of all likely to be effected by the situation is the criteria, rather than the benefit of any particular individual (especially the one who is making the evaluation). The moral standpoint is the only one we can defend when we must make a conscious decision about what should be done in situations involving other people, and where we are held accountable for these decisions to others.

My experience tells me that even very young children (e.g., third graders) find a discussion of such disputes highly interesting, certainly much more so than merely being told that such problems exist and are a worry to us all. There is no reason why third graders, for example, cannot begin thinking about the good and bad effects of industrialization (e.g., the improvement of many goods and services, the elimination of forestlands and wild country; the increase in the amount of leisure time, the automation of many jobs, the increase of suburbs, the building of superhighways, etc.).

A number of dilemmas present themselves for discussion and debate. Where are the people who work in industry to live? In dormitory-like highrises as in New York? In tract-style suburbs as in California?

Should people be encouraged to live in certain areas, like the inner city, through tax or other monetary incentives? How are people to get to work? Should more freeways be built? More rapid transit systems if this means steadily increasing taxes as a result? Should the automobile be banned from downtown areas? Under what conditions should people have to work? Should competition among workers be encouraged? Should people who do especially monotonous work be given extra pay for doing so? And so forth.

I have found that children like to debate such questions. Moreover, discussing and debating such questions puts them in the position to understand that somebody has to make a value judgement (to decide what should be done) in dilemma situations in order to finally act in some way that they are prepared to justify. Furthermore, that such a position is one which they will have to take themselves as they take on adult responsibilities themselves when they reach their majority. Notice, however, that the emphasis here is on the students discussing and (so far as is possible) trying out alternative recommendations with the teacher, to determine which is best, not the teacher telling or "suggesting" to them that a particular alternative is the best.

Training students to identify and analyze recommendations, and to make defensible recommendations themselves, however, cannot be done overnight. An increasing ability in this regard can only be developed gradually over time, through exposure to a wide variety of value issues and value judgments, coupled with a continuing opportunity to discuss these issues and assess these judgments with others. I do not think this will occur, however, through an emphasis on cognitive processes alone. For students also have to want to analyze rather than merely accept

recommendations (because their source is one of prestige, power, position, etc.). Furthermore, they must see the analysis of recommendations as a useful and helpful thing to do.

It is for this reason that any comprehensive program of values education must concern itself with not only intellectual development, but also emotional growth. It is difficult for very much of one to take place without a corresponding growth in the other. It seems logically and psychologically necessary, therefore, for values educators to try to help students grow and develop in both empathy and understanding.

At this point, therefore, I would like to suggest what seem to me to be the more crucial objectives in this regard. Four main sorts of objectives are envisaged: knowledge objectives; cognitive skill objectives; affective (interpersonal) skill objectives; and motivational objectives.

1. Knowledge Objectives. An increased awareness and understanding of:
   a. how people behave.
   b. reasons why people behave differently (i.e., the values, feelings, and other factors which cause them to behave in certain ways rather than others).
   c. what societies expect of people (i.e., the social, legal, and moral expectations and pressures on people).
   d. the basic terms in the vocabulary of evaluation (i.e., good right, best, obligation, duty, rights, equality, responsibility, etc.).
2. Cognitive Skill Objectives. An increased ability to:
   a. predict outcomes
   b. infer a general principle to apply to particular cases
   c. work back from a problem to a description of the kind of data needed to make a definite solution possible.

d. evaluate analogies (the basic form of moral argument)

e. assess recommendations using appropriate criteria

f. infer how people are likely to feel and react when placed in various (especially stressful) situations.

3. Affective (Interpersonal) Skill Objectives. An increased willingness and ability to:

a. treat other people (especially people of different ethnic, sexual, socio-economic, cultural, backgrounds) as creatures of equal worth.

b. see things from another person's point of view.

c. take other people's interest into account

d. care about the effects of one's actions upon others.

e. discuss one's feelings when & where necessary and/or appropriate.

f. recognize inner and/or interpersonal value conflicts when they appear.

g. seek out the most just ways to resolve value-conflicts.

4. Motivational Objectives. An increased desire to want to use the above skills and information in appropriate situations.

The above list is not meant to be inclusive, but it may serve as a starting point for discussion as to what a complete program of value education might include. I hope so.